

Practical interventions
in collection
acquisition,
description, and
presentation to foster
a more inclusive
library environment at
VU Amsterdam

Dr Michèle Meijer, subject
librarian for Philosophy, Religious
Studies, and Theology

Esther Nijland, MA, metadata
specialist

**University Library, Vrije
Universiteit Amsterdam**





Dr Pam Kaspers



Rian Kriesels, MA



Dr Michèle Meijer



Esther Nijland, MA

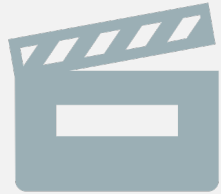
VU LIBRARY WORKING GROUP 'DECOLONIZATION AND COLLECTIONS'

HOW CAN LIBRARIES EFFECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO DECOLONIZATION?

WHAT DOMAINS SHOULD WE FOCUS ON?

WHAT ACTIONS CAN WE UNDERTAKE?

HOW LIBRARIES CAN CONTRIBUTE



Through practical interventions

acquisition
description
presentation



By seeking sustainable collaborations



By helping to spread awareness about decolonization and by supporting initiatives

CONTENTS

1. What is meant by decolonization of European libraries
2. Critique of decolonization work at libraries
3. How libraries can contribute to decolonization (incl. examples from the VU)
4. The challenges we face in contributing to decolonization
5. Towards overcoming these challenges
6. Summary

VU LIBRARY

- 1880:
 - Protestant University
 - Theology, law, arts
 - Only Protestant students
- 70s onwards:
 - Broadly oriented public university
 - All students welcome
- Library
 - Multidisciplinary collections
 - 33 kms of books, only partly open
 - Special Collections (archives, rare material, art and academic heritage)



VU Library study room with
17th-century globe from W.J. Blaeu

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NARRATIVE EXPANSIONS

Interpreting Decolonisation
in Academic Libraries

Edited by
Jess Cilly
Regina Everitt

2022

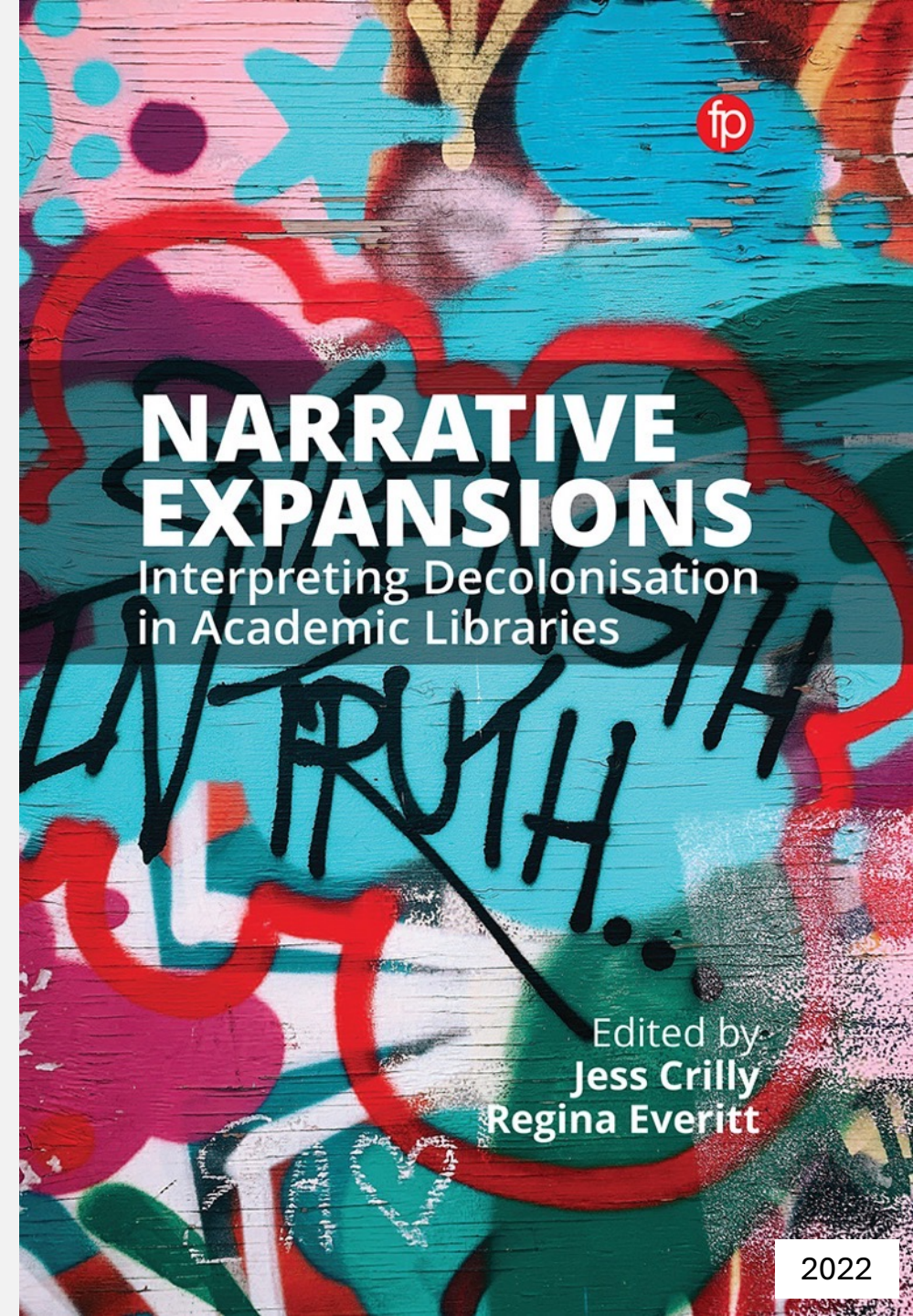
1. WHAT IS MEANT BY DECOLONIZATION OF EUROPEAN LIBRARIES

- Libraries part of a knowledge system rooted in colonialism
- Decolonization is more than 'diversity'
- Decolonization is not erasing colonial history
- Decolonization means
 - understanding the biases in our collections;
 - critically assessing our roles as librarians;
 - and fundamentally changing our daily operations

2. CRITIQUE OF DECOLONIZATION WORK AT UNIVERSITIES AND LIBRARIES

“There is a quandary at the heart of the call to decolonise – if the neoliberal university (...) is part of the problem, and systemically racist, is decolonisation a philosophical possibility? And, by association, can libraries decolonise within those structures and constraints, or is coloniality so embedded as to be immutable? Who has the insight, and the wisdom to do this?”

Crilly and Everitt 2022, p. 18



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3. HOW LIBRARIES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO DECOLONIZATION

- *Practical interventions*, in combination with
 - collaboration with staff and students;
 - influence with publishers and suppliers;
 - developing critical understanding of the biases in our collections.



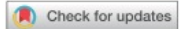
Book collection in the VU Decolonization Lab

PRACTICAL INTERVENTIONS IN THREE DOMAINS


- Acquisition: collection development and (support of) the diversification of reading lists
- Description: addressing outdated and offensive terminology
- Presentation: decolonizing library spaces

NEW REVIEW OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2023.2287450>

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

 Check for updates

Diversifying, decentering and decolonising academic libraries: a literature review

Jess Crilly 

2023

ACQUISITION/ COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

- Large part of budget goes to 'Big Deals' > bias towards high-ranking journals
- Limited funds besides Big Deals > reinforces Eurocentric bias
- Leveraging networks and expertise of researchers and teachers
- Supporting vs proactively trying to influence teaching and research

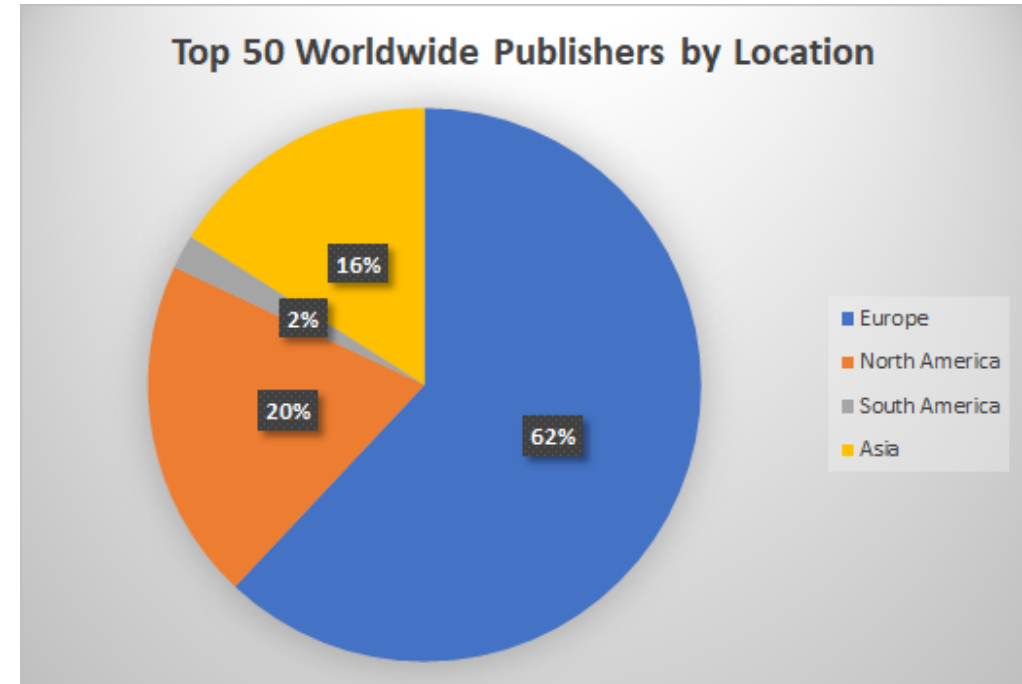


Image source: <https://libguides.derby.ac.uk/c.php?g=682403&p=4868302>
Data are from 2018 and taken from: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/78036-pearson-is-still-the-world-s-largest-publisher.html>

DESCRIPTION:
IDENTIFYING OUTDATED OR HARMFUL
LOCAL SUBJECT HEADINGS
AND PROVIDING RESPECTFUL ALTERNATIVES

Subject Heading	Alternative Heading
Alien criminals	Noncitizen criminals
Alien detention centers	Immigrant detention centers
Children of illegal aliens	Children of undocumented immigrants
Illegal aliens	Undocumented immigrants
Authors, Oriental	Authors, Asian
Fables, Oriental	Fables, Asian
Folk drama, Oriental	Folk drama, Asian
Oriental fiction	Asian fiction
Blind	Person who is blind
Deaf	Person who is deaf
Deaf women	Women who are deaf
Japanese Americans--Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945	Japanese Americans--Forced removal and in

OCLC'S LOCAL SUBJECT RE-MAPPING TEMPLATE

EXAMPLE

su:zigeuners

Sign in


Search history

HL.02115.-

Worldwide Editions and Formats [View All \(12\)](#)


7

Cite Share



[Zigeuners : de overleving van een reizend volk](#)

Authors: [Nico Bogaart](#) (Author), [Paul van Eeuwijk](#), [Jan Rogier](#) (Author), [Nico Bogaart](#) (Primaire auteur (lokaal)), [Paul van Eeuwijk](#) (Secundaire auteur (lokaal)), [Jan Rogier](#) (Secundaire auteur (lokaal))

 **Print Book** 1980
Amsterdam : Elsevier, 1980.

Subject Headings:
[Roma en Sinti](#)

✓ Available
VU Library, Main Building H07MAG1 Stack Request (normal loan)
LZ.00358.-



Zigeuners : de overleving van een reizend volk

Authors: [Nico Bogaart](#) (Author), [Paul van Eeuwijk, Jan Rogier](#) (Author), [Nico Bogaart](#) (Primaire auteur (lokaal)), [Paul van Eeuwijk](#) (Secundaire auteur (lokaal)), [Jan Rogier](#) (Secundaire auteur (lokaal))

 Print Book 1980

Amsterdam : Elsevier, 1980.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RECORD

More Author/Title Info:

Nico Bogaart [aut] ; Paul van Eeuwijk [aut] ; Jan Rogier [aut].

ISBN:

9010032795, 9789010032799

Physical Description:

160 p. : illustrations

VU Library Notes:

Acquisitienummer/Collectiebenaming: Acq.nr./col.: 076.900.2.00414

Genre:

Geschiedenis (vorm)

Subject Headings:

Faceted Application of Subject Terminology
[Romanies](#)

Library of Congress Subject Headings
[Romanies](#)

Répertoire de Vedettes-Matière
[Tsiganes](#)

Source not specified
[Volkenkunde. Culturele antropologie](#)
[G01](#)
[66.ed.1](#)
[66.ee.4](#)
[67.Sg.102](#)

GOO-trefwoorden thesaurus
[Roma en Sinti](#)
[Geschiedenis \(vorm\)](#)

Subject Headings

This subject heading has been altered by your library. By continuing with your search, the original subject heading will be searched for.

Nico Bogaart [a

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160 p. : illustrat

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[67.Sg.102](#)

GOO-trefwoorden thesaurus

[Roma en Sinti](#)

[Geschiedenis \(vorm\)](#)

Continue

https://vu.on.worldcat.org/search/detail/901374658?queryString=su%3AZigeuners&clusterResults=true&groupVariantRecords=false&changedFacet=format&subscope=zs%3A36730%3A%3Asz%3A36655&subformat=Book%3A%3Abook_printbook&stickyFacetsChecked=true



WHERE TO START?

Aboriginal

GESCHIEDENIS, GEBRUIK & MOGELIJKE GEVOELIGHEID

De term *‘Aboriginal’* komt van de Latijnse woorden *ab* en *origine*, die samen ‘van het begin’ betekenen. ‘Aboriginal’ komt vaak voor, onder andere in collectie-databases van musea, om de oorspronkelijke bewoners van een plek te omschrijven. De term wordt vooral gebruikt om te verwijzen naar inheemse volken in Australië en Canada (zie: *Inheems*). In Canada heeft men echter recentelijk de voorkeur gegeven aan de term *Inheems*.

‘Aboriginal’ houdt onvoldoende rekening met de complexiteit en diversiteit van inheemse volken. Veel inheemse volken in beide landen willen geen ‘Aboriginal’ genoemd worden en geven de voorkeur aan andere termen die hun identiteit kenmerken, zoals taal, land en relaties. In Canada begon men de term toe te passen in de jaren 1980, toen men een juridische en overkoepelende term zocht om de bestaande – maar controversiële – categorieën ‘Indiaan’, ‘Inuit’ en ‘Métis’ te beschrijven (zie: *Indiaan* en *Eskimo*).

SUGGESTIES

- Gebruik terminologie die door de groepen zelf wordt gebruikt en als respectvol wordt beschouwd. Als het niet mogelijk is om generalisatie te voorkomen, bijvoorbeeld wanneer de groepsnaam niet te achterhalen valt: gebruik dan ‘Aboriginal’ als samengesteld zelfstandig naamwoord – altijd met hoofdletter A. Bijvoorbeeld: *‘Aboriginal personen’*, *Aboriginal Australiërs*.
- In Canada geven sommige First Nation groepen de voorkeur aan ‘inheems’, bijvoorbeeld ‘inheemse persoon/personen’. ‘First Nations’ kan ook acceptabel zijn.
- In Australië passen ‘Aboriginal’ en ‘Straat Torres-ellanders’ soms.

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WOORDENLIJST

Allochtoon

Afkomst

GESCHIEDENIS, GEBRUIK & MOGELIJKE GEVOELIGHEID

‘Afkomst’ is op zich geen controversiële term, maar wordt gebruikt om aan iemand te vragen waar hij of zij vandaan komt. De vraag vaak gesteld wordt aan mensen waarvan uiterlijk aangenomen wordt dat zij ergens anders vandaan komen. In Nederland, kan de term in deze context wel als geïmpliciet (zie bijvoorbeeld ook *Roots* en *Allochtoon* en artikel Wayne Modest).

SUGGESTIES

- Zie de suggesties bij *Roots* en *Allochtoon*.

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WOORDENLIJST

Barbaar



Woordenlijst Inclusief Taalgebruik

Hoe zeg je dat?

Welke term? Hoe benoem je die groep, dat individu? Kan dit woord nog?

Het is niet altijd eenvoudig om de woorden te vinden om bepaalde groepen of mensen aan te duiden. Als je mensen met een handicap, of met een migratieachtergrond wil benoemen, of hen wil aanspreken. Of er zijn woorden over seksuele oriëntatie en identiteit die niet voor iedereen helemaal duidelijk zijn. Soms zoek je een alternatief voor een woord of begrip omdat je niemand wil kwetsen. Er zijn zoveel schijnbaar nieuwe woorden opgedoken, en andere woorden zijn alweer verouderd of worden als kwetsend ervaren. Bij al die twijfels biedt deze lijst advies en verheldering.

TYP HIER JE ZOEKTERM

CATEGORIEËN

CATEGORIEËN

CATEGORIEËN

0. ALGEMEEN (35)

1. Herkomst en migratie (45)

2. Genderrollen & -evenwicht (23)

3. Handicap (30)

4. Kansarmoede (15)

5. Leeftijd (22)

6. Genderdiversiteit en seksuele oriëntatie (45)

Gevoelig  (51)

Prullenmand  (26)

STRATEGY

Extract

Extract all local subject headings



Check

Check them against our sources

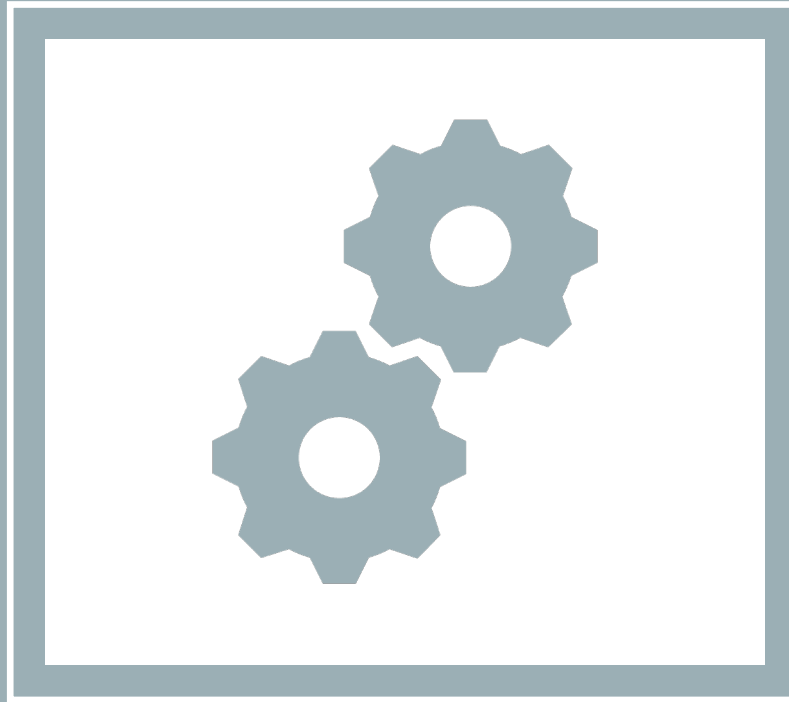


Replace

Replace them with more respectful alternatives

CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESPECTFUL ALTERNATIVE SUBJECT HEADINGS

- *Person-first vs. identity-first*
- No hurtful or outdated language
- Ask the people themselves
- Consult most recent sources



CONTINUOUS PROCESS

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

Please note that our catalogue may contain keywords that are outdated, culturally insensitive, and/or harmful. We are committed to providing alternatives that do justice to the people and communities who create and use our library materials and/or are represented herein. If you see outdated keywords within LibSearch, we invite you to let us know via ask.ub@vu.nl. Visit our [website](#) for more information about our activities to foster a more inclusive library environment.



Sign in

Advanced search Links ▾

Search history Saved Items (0)

Search VU Library and beyond



Search

Decolonization and a more inclusive library

WEBSITE

At the University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam we are aware of the inherent colonial biases in the ways we collect, describe, and present our materials. This webpage outlines the library's activities in fostering a more inclusive library, focusing on collection description, acquisition, and presentation.

Last update: 9 April 2024

By sharing examples and acknowledging challenges, we hope to create awareness around decolonization and invite students and staff to share their ideas and concerns with us.

Harmful and/or offensive descriptions in LibSearch

We strive to provide the most reliable and respectful description of library materials. It is important to note that our library catalogue may contain harmful and/or offensive descriptions, such as subject headings. We are committed to ensuring that such metadata are no longer visible, providing alternative descriptions where possible that respect the people and communities who create, use, and are represented in our library materials.

While acknowledging that our library contains harmful and/or offensive content, we will not remove

Do you have feedback or questions?

Reach out to us!

[Go to the feedback form](#)



Collection Decolonisation Lab

Main Building VU: 11B-02

[Check the collection in LibSearch](#)



PRESENTATION OF OPEN COLLECTIONS

- White, Eurocentric collections create feelings of lack of belonging and isolation of students of color
- Diversifying collections must be done in conversation with the faculties





PART OF THE
COLLECTION ON THE
OCCASION OF THE
DUTCH SLAVERY
MEMORIAL YEAR

4. CHALLENGES

- Local / within the library
 - Do all colleagues understand the purpose behind decolonization work?
- Local / within the university
 - How to respectfully involve students and staff in decolonization work, recognizing the emotional labor this work may entail, esp. for staff and students of color
- National and international / need for collaboration
 - Lack of expertise among librarians
 - Moving away from western classification systems
 - Influencing big publishers and vendors

5. TOWARDS OVERCOMING THESE CHALLENGES



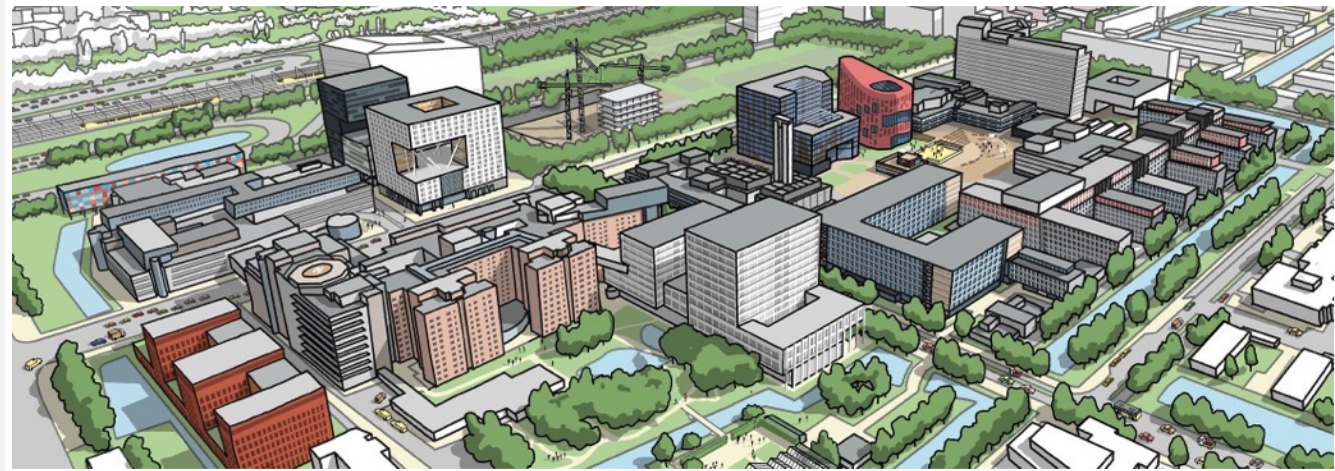
Seek sustainable collaborations with students and staff from their own universities and colleagues from other libraries.



Help spread awareness about decolonization and support diversity and decolonization initiatives within their own universities.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES - LOCALLY

- Within library
 - To see raising of support for decolonization work among colleagues as part of decolonization work
- Within university – the nature of librarians as connectors
 - Seek sustainable relationships with students and staff
 - E.g. Decolonization Lab
 - Supporting/connecting diversity and decolonization initiatives on Campus



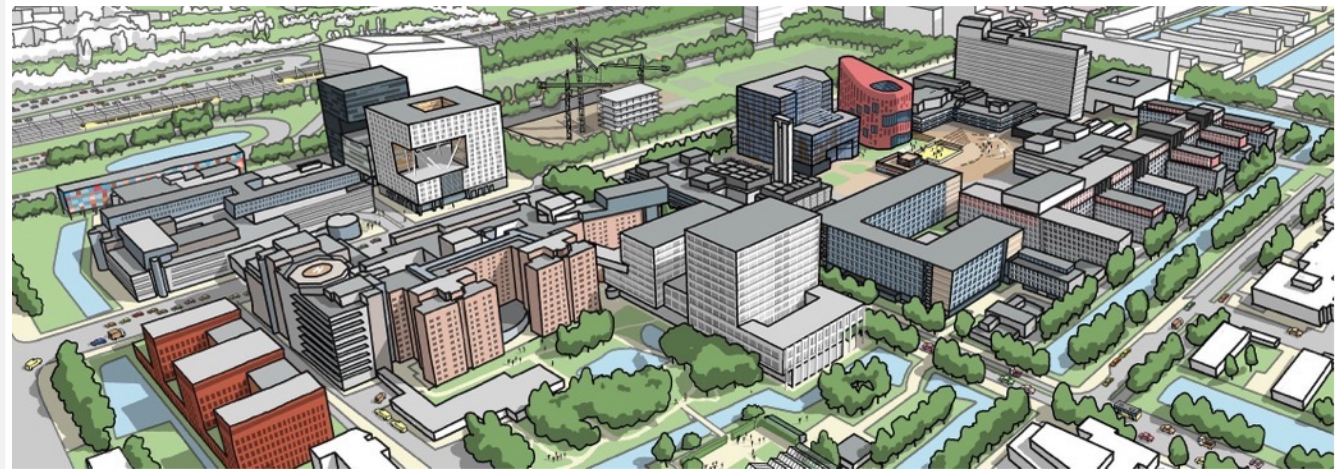
VU Campus



Diversity Office's Decolonization Lab at the VU Library

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES - LOCALLY

- Within library
 - To see raising of support for decolonization work among colleagues as part of decolonization work
- Within university – the nature of librarians as connectors
 - Seek sustainable relationships with students and staff
 - E.g. Decolonization Lab
 - Supporting/connecting diversity and decolonization initiatives on Campus



VU Campus

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES – NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

- 23 April 2024: National meeting ‘Decolonization and Collections’ at the VU
 - Two taskforces



6. SUMMARY



Decolonization should be an integral part of our daily work



Local actions can have meaningful impact



Call for collaboration

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
ATTENTION

VU Library working group

'Decolonization and Collections'

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions!

Pam Kaspers, p.j.kaspers@vu.nl

Rian Kriesels, rian.kriesels@vu.nl

Michèle Meijer, m.l.meijer@vu.nl

Esther Nijland, e.l.nijland@vu.nl

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